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ABSTRACT

In progressing toward the development of adequate instructional resources for use by the schools to capitalize upon the unique strengths of children with Hispanic-heritage language and cultural assets, Southwest Regional Lab (SWRL) Research and Development has produced or is in the process of producing the following assessment and instruction systems: (1) The Planning Decision System, (2) The Diagnostic Assessment System, (3) The English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children, (4) The Spanish Language and Concepts Program, and (5) The Spanish Language Reading Program. These programs, components within the framework of the SWRL Personalized Bilingual/Bicultural Education Model, provide the instructional resources for use by schools to insure that youngsters acquire proficiency in basic Spanish and English language skills requisite to success in Spanish/English elementary school instruction. Specific references are made indicating how cultural considerations are incorporated into the educational materials. (Author/AMH)

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Bridging Cultures in Educational Materials

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SWRL Educational Research and Development

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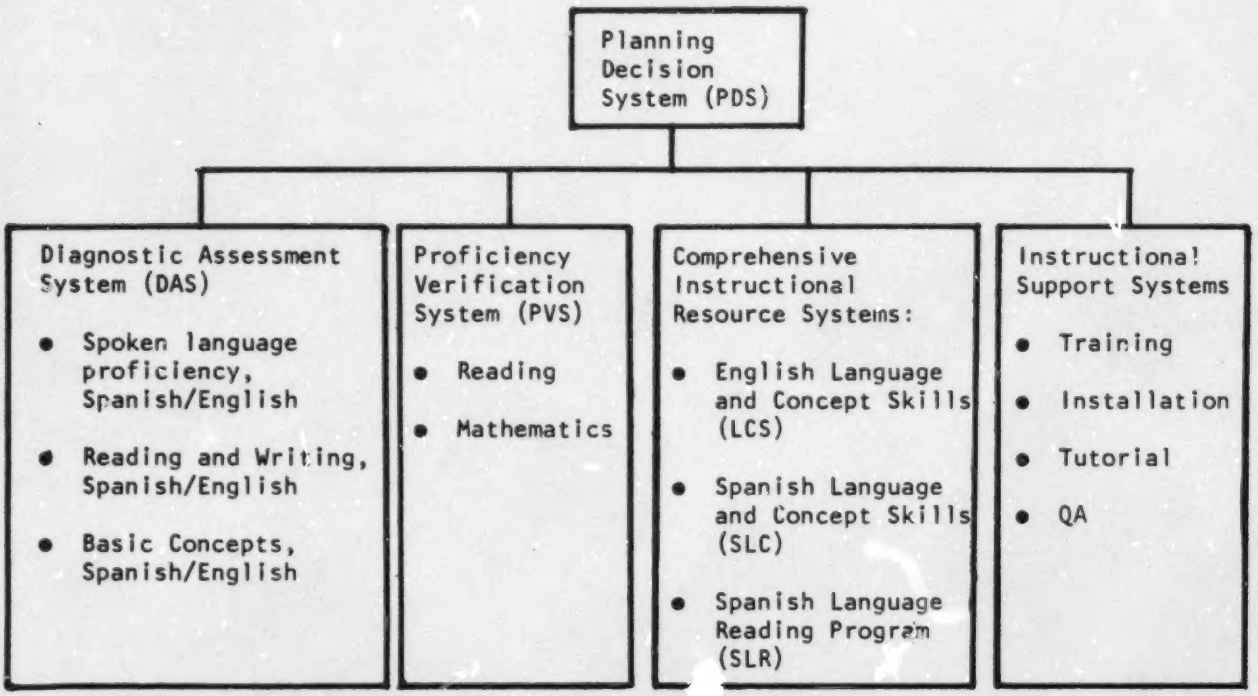
Bridging Cultures in Educational Materials

Huberto Molina

Introduction

In progressing toward the development of adequate instructional resources for use by the schools to capitalize upon the unique strengths of children with Hispanic-heritage language and cultural assets, SWRL research and development has produced or is in the process of producing the following assessment and instruction systems: (1) The Planning Decision System (PDS). (2) The Diagnostic Assessment System (DAS). (3) The English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children (LCS). (4) The Spanish Language and Concepts Program (SLC). (5) The Spanish Language Reading Program (SLR). These programs, components within the framework of the SWRL Personalized Bilingual/Bicultural Education (PBE) Model, provide the instructional resources for use by schools to insure that youngsters acquire proficiency in basic Spanish and English language skills requisite to success in Spanish/English elementary school instruction. SWRL research and development attention will provide the assessment and instructional resources particularly suited for these youngsters to efficiently and effectively acquire skill proficiencies prerequisite to and inclusive of reading in both Spanish and English. Continued inquiry in this area focuses on the identification of the differential strengths and problems of Spanish-speaking children in learning to succeed in school in both Spanish and English. Inquiry will result in the development of a set of systematic assessment and instructional programs that address these differential language and cultural characteristics and requirements.

The architectural elements comprising the Personalized Bilingual/ Bicultural Education (PBE) model form a simple graphic configuration:



Cooperative Instructional Planning: PBE recognizes that cooperative interaction between the home and school is fundamental to the instructional success of the child. To energize this interaction PBE provides a Planning Decision System. PDS is a simple mechanism that uses a diagnostic instructional status information report for each child to initiate planning by the school, community, and parents. The outcome of PDS in use is a personalized plan for the bilingual/bicultural education of each participating child that is mutually agreeable to the planning participants.

Diagnostic Assessment of Individual Children: The initial district implementation of PBE and the entry of new children as PBE operates in

a participating district entails a requirement for detailed and comprehensive information regarding the present instructional status of the child with respect to the proficiency assets relevant to PBE which the child currently possesses. The PBE Diagnostic Assessment System satisfies this requirement. DAS is an individually-administered, computer-supported system. In its initial version, DAS provides comprehensive information concerning the proficiency status of the child with respect to:

1. Spoken language proficiency--Spanish and English
2. Reading and writing proficiency--Spanish and English
3. Basic concepts--Spanish and English

PBE provides the DAS Tester Training Component by which a bilingual Spanish/English speaker is trained to administer the DAS assessments.

Proficiency Verification System: The PVS system may be used in conjunction with the full array of school operating conditions to provide regular periodic information in reading and mathematics, referenced to individual pupils and programs. All assessment batteries as well as all report interpretative materials are in parallel Spanish and English versions.

Comprehensive Instructional Resource Systems: To implement the Personalized Bilingual/Bicultural Education (PBE) model, the following instructional systems are entailed:

- Spanish Language and Concepts Program. Level 1, for children entering school in grades K-3 range. (Program being developed.)
- Spanish Language and Concepts Program. Level 2, for children entering school in grades 4-8. (Program Paralleling SLC, Level 1 but respecting age-maturity assets of pupils.)

- English:
  - English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children. Level 1, for children entering school in grades K-3. (LCS as it currently stands satisfies this function.)
  - English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children. Level 2, for children entering school in grades 4-8. (Program to be generated by PBE by embedding the architecture and substance of LCS in a form that respects the age-maturity assets of the children.)
- Spanish/English Reading:
  - Spanish Language Reading Program. Level 1, (Program being developed by PBE, presenting the Spanish language within its own cultural framework and linguistic system.)

The bicultural aspects of PBE are reflected and respected by specific system provisions within each of the programs enumerated.

Instructional Support Systems: PBE recognizes that instructional materials for teachers and pupils alone do not provide an adequate perspective for effective and efficient implementation of PBE features. This recognition is manifested in two ways. First, each PBE product system includes explicit and specific provisions for training/installation, quality assurance, and public involvement functions. Second, where product kits can be created to rapidly and economically interface an extant school capability with some aspect of PBE, this route is taken. Examples of this second consideration are the tutorial kit of LCS which makes it possible for a teacher to easily involve parents, aides, or older students directly in the instruction.

Cultural Experiences in Educational Materials

The PBE framework acknowledges that the best bridges are those built on firm footings and for that reason cultural considerations play a pervasive role throughout the PBE components. The importance

of preserving and promoting ties with both home and community are acknowledged by:

1. Considering the language and culture learned in the community as a valuable asset to be nurtured and expanded. Program materials include filmstrip, illustrations, stories and narratives which are authentic to the Spanish-speaking culture.

2. Encouraging the child's identification with the family unit by providing learning experiences which refer to immediate family and extended family relationships.

   Immediate family: mamá, papá, hermano(a)

   Extended family: abuelo(a), tío(a), primo(a), padrino, madrina, comadre, cuñado(a), tocayo(a).

3. Acknowledging the valuable resource offered by Spanish-speaking adults by providing tutorial components by which the child's educational experience is extended. Spanish-speaking community members are encouraged to act as aides or as tutors in using the tutorial resources. The tutorial materials may be used at the school site, in the neighborhood, or in the child's home.

4. Stimulating parental involvement in the child's reading process. Materials are provided in Spanish that describe and provide additional reading experiences for the child, e.g., the above mentioned tutorial materials and, additionally, booklets are used to further strengthen decoding skills taught in the classroom.

5. Providing social rewards consistent with success-oriented reinforcements which a child hears in his community, e.g., as part of tutor training procedures, following a correct response, tutors are taught to provide appropriate and frequent encouragement for successful performance, e.g., ¡QUÉ BIEN RESPONDISTE, JUANITO!/¡MUY BIEN HECHO!

6. Respecting the degree of language resources the Spanish-speaking learner brings to school by insuring that children acquire specified skills consistent with previously acquired Spanish language skills. To illustrate, use of the SLR-1 Placement Aid insures that children who already have met SLR-1 proficiency are not forced to receive the instruction even though they already have the proficiency. Assessments are administered at various points. The built-in assessment system ensures that each child needs the reading instruction and is meeting proficiency level at program intervals. Remediation is provided by the program in the areas found troublesome to individual

children. End of Program results inform the teacher the degree to which children have mastered Program objectives. Thus, such resources children bring to the classroom are acknowledged and credited in an operational way, and additional language and cultural resources are added to their repertoire.

7. Stories, games, rhymes, and activities are referenced to the culture of Spanish-speaking people. The cultural activities are open-ended to encourage children who may represent a diversity of cultural backgrounds to add their particular cultural experiences to those provided by the Program.

PBE instructional resources not only teach about the Spanish-speaking culture, e.g., behavior, mores, artifacts, but also the development of the culture's civilization--its history. While culture encompasses the unique qualities of a people, history records the events related to the development of civilization. To illustrate, if one is going to teach about the vaquero one must not present just the individual with his accouterments, e.g., chaps, spurs, saddle, etc., one additionally must show the evolution of the vaquero from Mexico into the Southwest, noting his contribution in the development of American ranching. To illustrate further, in one of the PBE components, children see the ancient pyramids through a filmstrip. Explanations are presented in regards to (1) why the pyramids were built, (2) the talents required to produce the buildings and their decoration, (3) the fact that many pyramids contain murals, (4) murals painted by contemporary Mexican-American artists are shown to demonstrate that the tradition of mural painting is continuing today.

Cultural experiences are interspersed in the language lessons. Thus, children use acquired language skills in the context of cultural experiences. To illustrate this point, in the Spanish Language and Concepts Program (SLC), one filmstrip with cultural activities is provided for each unit. The entire filmstrip can be presented at the end

of the unit or in parts during the unit. Such flexibility of presentation encourages the teacher to incorporate cultural information with the instruction as seems appropriate to the teacher.

Instructional programs within the PBE model provide for systematic and organized instructional treatment of a defined set of topics. In the case of the Spanish Language and Concepts Program, Level 1, the following cultural topics are presented:

- Variety of buildings and their function in the Southwestern part of the U.S. and in Mexico.
- Manifestations of indigenous cultures in existance today.
- Aztec music and instruments.
- Christopher Columbus: Strangers in a known land.
- Indigenous groups in the Southwest
- Place names in Spanish and reasons why.
- What a Vaquero does, wears, and why.

To make the PBE instructional programs instructionally manageable for teachers and pupils and economically feasible for schools and districts, each of the cultural topics is treated less than definitively. Clearly, there are more worthwhile instructional aspects of each of the topics than can reasonably be included in the programs. The PBE architecture provides for instructional support resources which teachers are encouraged to use under any circumstances where time is available to further convey to children the artistic and historical experience of the Chicano and the Hispanic heritage. Using the instructional support resources the children will acquire a wealth of experiences that will build and foster an awareness of the Chicano experience. The instructional

resources will offer a supplement to the standard all inclusive music, art, and social studies curriculum, since it will relate directly to Chicanos to reinforce their cultural heritage. To other culturally diverse students the instructional resources will offer an awareness of the rich expression and experience of the Chicano people.

The instructional resources will augment and extend instruction used with the PBE programs and they will also be appropriate for bilingual/bicultural curricula that involve materials other than the PBE programs. The organization of the artistic and historical topics involved will ensure that experiential support is provided with continuity and focus. Thus, these resources will provide a rich interrelationship between the cultural complexity of the Spanish-speaker in the U.S. in the context of today's society. Contributions of the Hispanic, specifically the Chicano, will be carefully and accurately presented to prevent their being overlooked in the experience of the child's early education.

Additional Cultural Input

The plan for PBE and its components was prepared in preliminary form by SWRL staff and is reviewed periodically by members of an external consultant panel of recognized authorities in the bilingual/bicultural education community. Consultant review panels participate during the following stages of the design and development of the PBE components:

Program Architecture

1. Description of program architecture
2. Reaction to the architecture
3. Revision of the architecture

Program Development

1. Program specifications
2. Reaction to program components during development
3. Visitation by consultants to school sites during tryout
4. Reaction to training and installation plans

Program Evaluation

1. Reaction to data collection plan
2. Reaction to program results as evidenced by analysis of data collected

The consultants represent various disciplines, linguistics, psychology, anthropology and culture, sociology, and curriculum. By use of consultants at various stages of program architecture, development, and evaluation the PBE model utilizes the knowledge and cultural base of the population for whom the educational experiences are designed. The PBE model attempts to build a strong foundation of cultural awareness and appreciation, for it acknowledges that mutual respect of two cultures is primary in functioning bilingually and biculturally.